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SUBJECT: THREE ASSISTANT MINISTERS AND THE DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LOSE PRIMARY ELECTIONS

¶1. On August 30, Assistant Ministers Oliphant Mfa and Ambrose Masalila in the Ministry of Local Government and Duke Lefhoko in the Ministry of Trade lost their seats in the last batch of the Botswana Democratic Party's (BDP) primary elections held in the northern constituencies of the country. Thebe Mogami, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, also lost his Tswapong South constituency, suffering a similar fate to that of another sitting Member of Parliament representing the Francistown South constituency.

¶2. Mfa, who has been an MP for the past 15 years, caused a stir recently when he suggested that President Ian Khama's expected two terms in office be extended for a third term. Mfa's loss was unexpected, especially after he had belittled his challenger a week before the primaries in response to allegations of misusing a government vehicle. Mfa had derisively noted that there was no need for him to campaign with a government vehicle as his opponent was a "light weight." Mfa is renowned for his outspokenness. For instance, he often publicly criticized companies that failed to finish government projects on time, even once threatening to erase them from the register of eligible contractors. Rumor has it that the way he conducts himself might have had an impact on his primary elections performance.

¶3. Apart from the surprising number of incumbents losing their seat, a salient fact from the current BDP primary election's outcome is that less women will be competing for parliamentary seats in the 2009 general elections. Only three women managed to win their primary elections in the BDP.

Drouin